

Relocation of Fargo from Toddington Lane, Littlehampton to land adjoining the Vinery site, Poling BN18 9PY

**Proposed distribution warehouse and covered storage, trade counter and associated offices.
Upgrading of access road for and improvement of existing junction with the A27**



Planning, Design and Access Statement

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**Paul Airey Planning Associates Ltd
The Coach House, Taylors
Rusper Rd
Capel
Surrey
RH5 5HF**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the application

1.1.1 This planning, design and access statement outlines a proposal for the relocation of Fargro Ltd from their existing premises at Toddington lane, Littlehampton to a new site immediately to the south of the Vinery Industrial Estate at Poling approximately 1 mile away. The scheme involves the development of a 6400m² storage and distribution warehouse together with 5337m² of covered storage. An improved access to the A27 is also proposed. The relocation of the company has been necessitated by the fact that their current site is at the centre of recently approved urban expansion at North Littlehampton. As a result of this proposed development, Fargro have approximately two years to find a suitable relocation site that will enable the business to continue and the existing staff to be retained.

1.1.2 It became clear in 2010 that the development at North Littlehampton would come to fruition and the company's site would be required for the development. An extensive site search was undertaken over a period of 18 months which resulted in a site immediately adjoining the Vinery at Poling being identified as available, suitable for the proposed use and in a location near enough to the existing site to be acceptable to existing staff. On the basis that no other sites were suitable, available or affordable and after preliminary discussions with the Council, the company took the decision to prepare detailed plans for submission to the Local Planning Authority.

1.1.3 Full details of the proposed development at the site are provided in this statement and accompanying consultant reports. A separate report examining the justification for the relocation of the company's premises in the context of local plan policy DEV 8 part (i) is attached with the application.

1.1.4 During the preliminary work on the application, a number of public consultation events took place to inform local residents and businesses about the proposals. These are detailed in a Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Curtin & Co.

1.2 Background to the existing company business and employment

1.2.1 Fargro is a horticultural wholesale supplier of goods to the UK horticultural industry. Founded in 1946, the business operated from Worthing until the late 1970's when it relocated to its present site in Toddington Lane, Littlehampton. The core of the business involves the supply of horticultural requisites to horticultural businesses throughout the south-east of England and East Anglia. The products

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involved include high-bulk, low-value products such as compost, fertilisers and plastic pots, as well as low volume, high value products such as agricultural chemicals. The company also have a national distribution business based on exclusive products (plant pots, wicker baskets and agricultural chemicals) from multi-national manufacturers.

1.2.2 The business currently utilises 9,500 m² of storage at its existing site and a neighbouring rented site in a variety of structures, including warehouses and covered storage structures, 2500m² of outside storage, and 500 m² of offices in a separate building. It operates 5 HGV's (rigid trucks) and 2 LGV's, delivering direct to growers throughout the south-east and East Anglia.

1.2.3 Fargro is the most significant supplier to the horticultural industry throughout the south of England, with an estimated 40-50 % market share. The company is owned by 300 shareholders, all of whom are connected to the industry and include most local growers in the Arun area (reflecting the co-operative history of the company). Fargro has customers across the south-east serviced from Littlehampton, but the highest concentration is in Arun and Chichester districts (Fig 1).

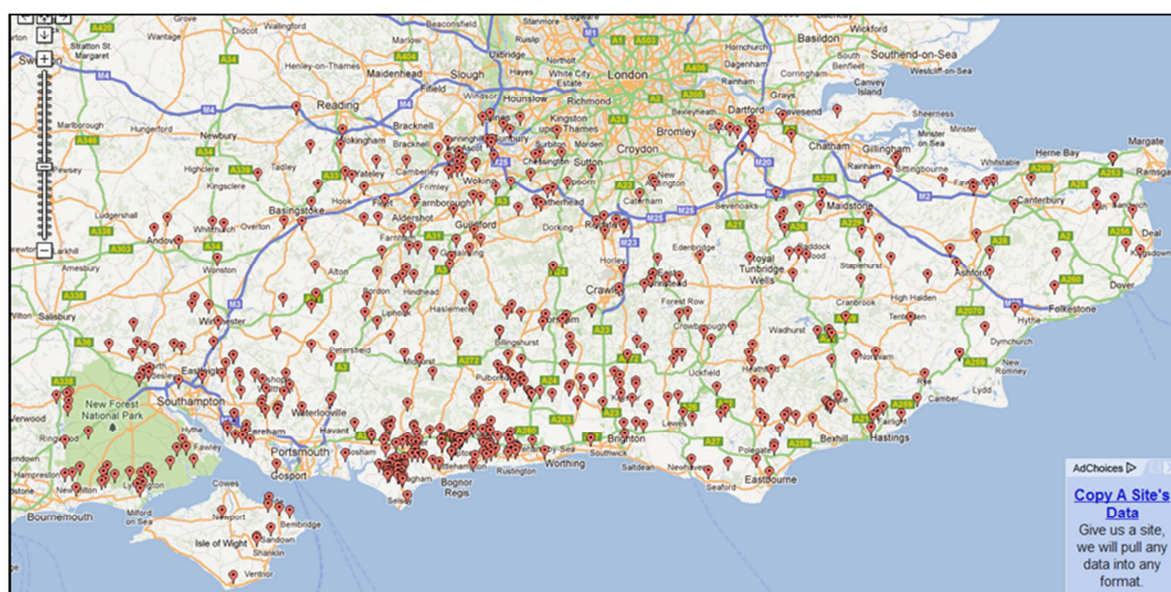


Fig 1. Map showing the location of customers spending more than £1000 pa with Fargro. The area of distribution is wide but there is a marked concentration in the Arun area.

1.2.4 The business has expanded significantly in recent years from a turnover of £13m in 2007 to £21.3m in 2011, an increase of 64% in four years. This is a result of investment in new products and skilled staff. The company employs 57 people of which 49 are based at Littlehampton, an increase from 51 in early 2011. The past three years have seen record profits and the business has a strong business plan for

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further growth. However, Fargro is a horticultural business working on slim margins and although the company will receive funds from the sale of the Toddington site, these would not be adequate to allow for a relocation to a site on a conventional industrial estate of the size required. The storage requirements of the company are more geared to agricultural buildings than normal storage warehouses, as the only requirements are to keep product secure and dry. For a significant proportion of the product handled by the company, simple polythene covered storage is entirely sufficient. The products supplied are generally high-bulk including plant pots, fertiliser, compost, hanging baskets and agricultural chemicals.

1.2.5 Horticulture is a large and successful part of the economy in Sussex and a recent study partly funded by ADC concluded;

“The historical aspect of the industry and its dynamism have made it a significant part of the local economy, employing over 1,300 full-time staff as well as thousands of part-time workers. It has a production-only turnover of about £120 million, and supports a large service industry. Marketing trends and currency issues all indicate a healthy capacity for long-term expansion.”

1.2.6 Fargro plays an important role within the local industry providing technical support as well as products and is active within many horticultural associations. Fargro employ a range of staff including two PhD's and seven degree level staff with a total annual salary cost of over £2.1m.

1.3 Background to the need for a relocation

1.3.1 The existing Fargro site is in the centre of the North Littlehampton development recently approved by Arun District Council. This development of 1,250 residential units and significant business facilities, will bring more than £30m of infrastructure benefits to the District, including a railway bridge and a new school. The new development requires Fargro to vacate its current site within two years of the sale of any part of the overall development site, which is expected in Q3, 2013. Bearing in mind that construction of a new warehouse and office facility will take at least 12-18 months, there is a significant risk that continuity will not be maintained if there are any significant delays in the planning process.

1.3.2 It is important to recognise, that the need to relocate the business has come about due to the proposed redevelopment at North Littlehampton. The scheme has been in gestation for many years but is now close to being implemented. Fargro have been a willing participant of the redevelopment proposals, but now find themselves in a position where they have no option but to relocate to continue in business. While, in an ideal world, the company would have waited to confirm its relocation proposals before agreeing to the redevelopment scheme affecting their existing site, Fargro did not wish to delay the process and now have a limited time to

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complete their relocation To maintain the business, any new site needs to be of at least the same size and to offer similar locational advantages to the existing site, with good access to the road network and close to the homes of the current workforce. The overall cost of the relocation needs to be within the available budget of the company, and day to day running costs will need to be commensurate with those at the existing site. The relocation must be achieved within an economic acquisition cost which is affordable for the business looking forward.



Fig 2. Aerial view showing the proximity of the proposed relocation site (top right) at the Vinery to the company's existing site (bottom left). The actual distance between the sites is approximately 2 km. North is to the top of the page.

2. Planning Issues

2.1 Current Development Plan

2.1.1 The development plan for Arun District Council comprises the current local plan, approved in 2003, and the national planning policy framework (NPPF), together with the draft submission district local plan which is due to be considered by the Council during May 2013. The provisions of the South East Plan that previously related to the district have now been revoked.

2.1.2 The weight to be assigned to the policies of both the current local plan and the proposed submission local plan needs to be assessed in the context of the NPPF. This document, which forms the basis of government planning guidance, states that policies adopted prior to 2004 should be given appropriate weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

2.1.3 The policies within the submission draft local plan (2013) will only carry limited weight at this stage of the process, but as the policies progress towards adoption there will carry greater weight. Consideration of the application will therefore need to take into account all three of the above documents in coming to a decision.

2.2 Local Plan Policies GEN 2 and GEN 3

2.2.1 The site itself is Greenfield land and outside the settlement boundary and there would normally be a presumption against development. Policy GEN 2 of the local plan states that development will not be permitted outside the built-up area boundary unless it is consistent with other local plan policies. Policy GEN 3 safeguards the countryside for its own sake, and states that development will not be permitted unless it meets certain criteria.

2.2.2 It is accepted that the principles of GEN 2 and GEN 3 of the local plan have been confirmed by recent appeal decisions and hence are consistent with the principles of the NPPF. Development of a Greenfield site in the countryside would normally be contrary to these policies.

2.2.3 It is argued however, that the specific proposal in this application is given support in both local and national policy guidance. The actual wording of policy Gen 3 states:

POLICY GEN3 Protection of the Countryside

Outside the Built-Up Area, as defined on the Proposals Map, the countryside will be safeguarded for its own sake. Development will not be permitted unless:

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- (i) it meets the operational needs of agriculture, forestry, the extraction of minerals or the deposit of waste;..*
- (v) it is in accordance with a policy in Sections 2 and 3 of the plan referring to a specific use or type of development.*

2.2.4 The activities of Fargro are focused entirely on the direct support of local horticulture businesses. Horticulture is within the definition of agriculture and it is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that the development of this horticultural supply business is supported, at least in principle, by the policy. It is accepted however that the proposed use does not **need** a rural location, however in the absence of a suitable urban site, it is considered that the current proposed location can be justified. Part (v) of policy GEN 3 and the main section of policy GEN 2 both make it clear that an exception can be made to both of these policies where a particular development is in accordance with another policy of the plan and it is considered this is the case in respect of this application.

2.3 Local Plan Policy DEV 8

2.3.1 The current local plan does provide specific policy guidance for local firms seeking to develop on sites outside the existing built-up area. Policy DEV 8 states:

POLICY DEV 8 Circumstances in which Additional Development may be Permitted - Local Firms

Planning permission may be granted to local firms, currently located within the District, proposing development on sites outside the built-up area, provided that the applicant can demonstrate:-

- (i) that no acceptable alternative can be identified within existing permitted or allocated floorspace or within or through redevelopment of existing commercial premises; and*
- (ii) that the proposal:*
 - (a) exhibits a high standard of design and layout;*
 - (b) is capable of being well served by public transport or otherwise is readily accessible other than by private car to a significant residential workforce if employment intensive uses are proposed;*
 - (c) provides access arrangements and parking facilities in accordance with the Council's adopted standards;*
 - (d) relates sympathetically to the surrounding built or natural environment;*

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- (e) *includes suitable landscaping and floorscaping provision where appropriate;*
- (f) *displays a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring uses in order that the amenities of nearby residents in particular are protected; and*
- (g) *incorporates, where appropriate, crime prevention measures.*

A legal agreement or planning conditions may be necessary to secure:

- (i) *implementation within a specified time period;*
- (ii) *no subdivision; and*
- (iii) *the restriction of occupancy to the firm concerned.*

2.3.2 It is considered that this policy is relevant to the current proposal and that the scheme meets the key criteria of the policy. It is important however to assess whether the policy is still relevant in the context of the NPPF and this is discussed below. The compliance with part (i) of the policy is dealt with in a separate accompanying report to the application, but the remaining criteria of the policy are considered later in this document.

2.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.4.1 At a national level, there is significant support for proposals that would support local economic development, and it is considered that the following extracts from the NPPF confirm the current relevance of policy DEV 8. It is also noted that the principle of the policy is proposed to be retained in the new local plan, and while this is still to be subject to further consultation and scrutiny at an Inquiry, there is no reason to suppose that the policy should not be confirmed if it reflects government guidance.

4.11 The NPPF suggests that there is a need for the planning system to perform an economic role by *'contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation'* (Para 7)

2.4.2 The NPPF also suggests that *'Local Planning Authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area.'*(para 14) and should *'support existing business sectors, taking account of where they are expanding or contracting and , where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not*

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anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.’ (para 21)

2.4.3 It is clear that sustainable economic development has a high priority in national planning policy and where this can be achieved with limited detrimental impact, there would be strong justification for approving a scheme which safeguarded local jobs and businesses.

2.4.4 It is recognised that the NPPF also places strong emphasis on the need for planning to be ‘genuinely plan led.’ While, in an ideal world, it might be desirable for the new local plan to have been adopted before key development decisions are made, the very restricted timetable for relocation for Fargro, makes this option unrealistic. A decision on the suitability of the proposed site needs to be made urgently, so that the company can resolve its future plans before it is required to move.

2.5 Compliance of the scheme with section (ii) of policy DEV 8

2.5.1 This section of the report considers how the application complies with section (ii) of policy DEV 8. Reference will be made to the relevant part of the report which deals with the subject in question but a conclusion on each element of the policy is made here.

- (a) **exhibits a high standard of design and layout.** The design section of this report describes the design elements that have been incorporated into the scheme. It has to be recognised that the proposal is for a large building which essentially has a functional purpose – the storage of horticultural products. The scope for high quality design is therefore limited, however the layout and the details of design have been carefully thought out, and in conjunction with the extensive landscaping proposed around and within the site, it is considered that the development overall is of a high standard. Is considered that this part of the policy is complied with.
- (b) **Is capable of being well served by public transport or otherwise is readily accessible other than by private car to a significant residential workforce if employment intensive uses are proposed.** It is recognised that the site, like the current location of the company, is not well served by public transport and the majority of employers will continue to use a car to travel to work. It is pointed out however that because the relocation site is close to the existing site of the company, and immediately adjacent to the A 27, the proposal will have little impact on the road network. It is also important to recognise that the proposed scheme is not an employment intensive use – in fact the number of employees compared to the floorspace being provided is very low. It is therefore considered that this aspect of the policy is not intended to apply to this type of activity. It is considered that this part of the policy is not strictly relevant to the scheme proposed.

- (c) **Provides access arrangements and parking facilities in accordance with the Council's adopted standards.** As discussed in section 5.4, The access to the A 27 needs to be approved by the Highways Agency as that road is a trunk road. The access proposed will be to Highways Agency standards. The internal access arrangements will meet the Council's highway standards, and the parking proposed is within the guidelines laid down in the local plan. It is considered that this part of the policy is fully complied with.
- (d) **Relates sympathetically to the surrounding built or natural environment.** It is recognised that the scheme does involve encroachment into the open countryside. The proposal is however immediately adjacent to the Vinery industrial estate, and it is considered that the scheme has the potential to appear as a natural extension to that development. The majority of views towards the site from inhabited areas to the south and west are from a long-distance (in excess of 500m), and the existing developed backdrop, together with the extensive landscaping proposed will mitigate any impact. In fact from long-distance, it is considered that views towards the Vinery will be improved. The residential properties on Lillian Terrace are closer to the development but again, mitigation of the development will be provided by landscaping and the removal of commercial traffic from the residential street. It is considered that the scheme does, as far as is feasible, relate sympathetically to the surrounding built and natural environment.
- (e) **Includes suitable landscaping and floorscaping provision where appropriate.** There are extensive landscaping proposals which will reduce the impact of the scheme and provide ecological and visual benefits in the area. It is considered that this part of the policy is complied with.
- (f) **displays a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring uses in order that the amenities of nearby residents in particular are protected.** The residential properties on Lillian Terrace are close to the development proposal but the scheme has been designed to minimise the impact on these properties. The proposal will remove existing commercial traffic from the residential road, and there will be extensive landscaping incorporated between the development site and the properties. In particular there will be a large area of planting at the southern end of Lillian Terrace, to the west of Yarmer barn. The improvement to the right of way adjacent the development site, and the upgrading of the access to the A 27 will also benefit the amenities of these residential properties. The noise impact report also demonstrates that noise will not be a significant issue from the proposal. It is considered that this part of the policy is complied with.
- (g) **Incorporates, where appropriate, crime prevention measures.** The site will be secure with appropriate fencing, lighting and security. There is only a single entrance to the site which will be locked at night, and the site also benefits from its proximity to the existing Vinery industrial estate. The residential properties on Lillian Terrace also provide the area with a high level of security as a result of the natural surveillance of the residents. It is considered that this part of the policy is complied with.

2.5.2 Overall, is considered that the scheme as proposed does comply with the requirements of policy DEV 8, and by implication is compliance with policies GEN 2 and GEN 3.

2.6 Local plan policy GEN 7

2.6.1 A further relevant policy in the local plan is GEN 7 which relates to the form of any new development. The policy states:

POLICY GEN 7 The Form of New Development

Planning permission will only be granted for schemes displaying high quality design and layout. Development proposals involving new buildings or significant extensions or alterations must be accompanied by an illustrated written analysis of the site and its immediate setting, together with its relationship with the relevant townscape, landscape, wildlife and movement characteristics of the wider area.

Development will be permitted provided it:

- (i) makes efficient use of land or buildings and, in the case of new residential development, achieves net densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare;*
- (ii) demonstrates that it responds positively to the identified characteristics and resources of the site and the area to create attractive places and spaces with the needs of people in mind and respects and enhances local distinctiveness;*
- (iii) promotes sustainable development, including the effective use and conservation of energy and reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car;*
- (iv) does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on adjoining occupiers, land, uses or property and, where relevant, facilitates the development of adjoining sites;*
- (v) takes account of any unacceptable adverse impacts that may arise from adjoining land uses or property;*
- (vi) retains significant open or wooded areas which, in their own right, make a material contribution to the local environment;*
- (vii) allows for the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles, giving priority to pedestrians;*

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(viii) provides for vehicle parking in accordance with Policy GEN12 and Appendix 2 and open space in accordance with Policy GEN20.

In all cases, the District Council will expect a high standard of design and layout and all applicants will be encouraged to improve the visual amenities of the particular locality in scale, external appearance, hard and soft landscaping and material

2.6.2 The requirements of this policy overlap to a certain extent with those of DEV 8 and the issues raised are dealt with elsewhere in this statement. Overall, it is considered that the proposal complies with the requirements of GEN 7.

2.6.3 Irrespective of the support given by planning policy to the scheme, there are also a number of other compelling reasons why consideration should be given to supporting the current proposal. In particular:

- The need to relocate has been driven by the planning permission granted for the North Littlehampton development. There is clear justification for the Council to also support a suitable relocation site within the district for a firm displaced by this development.
- Any relocation site that is considered by the company, needs to be close enough to the existing site to help ensure that current staff can be retained.
- The company are receiving insufficient funds from the purchase of their land to allow for a relocation to a serviced industrial estate, even if a suitable sized site was available within an appropriate timescale.
- The company provide an essential service for many existing horticultural businesses in the Arun area and a continuation of the business is essential if disruption of supply to these operators is to be avoided.
- The company operate a business that is directly linked to horticulture. This type of business, directly supporting the rural economy, is a far more suitable development for a rural location than a normal B8 (storage and distribution) use.
- The site is not within a designated area for landscape or historic protection, and the development could progress without significant impact on the environment of neighbours.

2.7 Loss of Agricultural land

2.7.1 The site is currently used for horse grazing, but is adjacent to areas of high-grade agricultural land. The actual land classification of the site is however unclear and the land has however not been used productively for agricultural purposes in recent years if indeed ever. The land is also part of the Vinery landholding and is unlikely to come forward for productive use, even if the application was not approved.

2.7.2 Under the current NPPF, there is no inherent requirement to avoid developing on the best and most versatile agricultural land. Paragraph 112 Of the NPPF states:

112. Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

2.7.3 The limited size of the site and the lack of alternative options for Fargro suggest that the agricultural status of the land should not be a significant constraint.

3. Details of the proposal

3.1 Description of the application site

3.1.1 The proposed development site comprises an undeveloped field immediately to the south of The Vinery, Poling, and the site of Yarmer Barn, a former agricultural barn which now has approval for B1/B8 uses. The Vinery is a major industrial estate on the site of the former Blue Prince Mushroom production facility at Poling. The site is located to the south of the main A27 and over 500m to the east of the village of Poling, in Arun District, West Sussex. At the end of 2003, the mushroom plant, along with many other similar facilities in the UK, was shut down due to low cost competition from Europe, and the site was sold to the present owners, Vinery Management.

3.1.2 The existing Vinery industrial site comprises an area of about 6 ha (15 acres) of land. 2ha (5 acres) at the western end of the site has planning approval for a green and kitchen waste compost facility (A37/08, renewed in 2010 ref WSCC 080/10/PO) The adjoining industrial area consists of 46 former mushroom growing tunnels mostly linked by a central service building. There are a number of other buildings of varying construction types throughout the site, together with large areas of hardstanding. Planning approval was granted in 2006 for the reuse of the remainder of the site for Industrial B1 and B8 uses. (A/14/05) The buildings have been generally refurbished and all are now leased and occupied in accordance with the permission.

3.1.3 Immediately to the east of the Vinery site is a row of 16 terraced properties which were originally built as workers housing for mushroom farm. These properties are all now privately owned. These properties jointly own a private sewage treatment plant to the south and an access to this.

3.1.4 Immediately to the south of the existing industrial estate, and part of the overall landholding, is the application site which is currently used for grazing horses. The land within the site, which is generally flat and level, lies approximately 1.3m lower than the existing industrial site. There is a drainage ditch running across the site from north to south and this connects to a further drainage ditch along the southern boundary of the site.

3.1.5 To the south and to the west of the site, are further agricultural fields separated from the site by ditches and hedgerows. To the east of the site lies the sewage treatment plant mentioned above, in a small strip of land which encroaches into the development site. Beyond the site to the East are further open arable fields.

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3.1.6 In the north-east corner of the development site lies Yarmer Barn. This building will be retained in the development proposal.

3.1.7 Immediately to the north of the A 27 is the South Downs National Park, however there are no specific landscape or environmental designations affecting the site.

3.2 Size, scale and layout of proposed development

3.2.1 The proposed development site is an undeveloped area of approximately 4.65 ha (11.5 acres), immediately south of the existing industrial buildings at the Vinery. The development scheme itself comprises a warehouse and office building of 6,400 m², covered storage of 5,337 m² and associated roadways and parking. The main building lies to the centre of the site with a covered storage area to the east. A number of different layout configurations were considered during the planning of the site, but the submitted layout was considered preferable as it allowed for the retention of the drainage ditch running across the site, which will continue to assist in draining the site and provide a landscape feature as well as an opportunity for enhancing ecology. At the west end of the site is a public footpath, and the need to ensure that this was not affected by the development, also influenced the layout. Another influencing factor was the need to ensure level access to all parts of the main building. As the site is lower than the adjoining industrial land from which the main vehicular access will be provided, the access road slopes down from the point at which it enters the site to the edge of the main building. To achieve a flat and level access road around the whole of the main building required the building to be located towards the south of the site.

3.2.2 The loading area of the building is located on the south side. This configuration has been chosen to ensure that loading and unloading activities as far away from the residential properties to the East of the Vinery as possible, and to reduce visible working operations at the front of the site.

3.2.3 The main building will comprise a triple gabled steel frame construction with a maximum height at the ridge of 9 metres. The covered storage construction would be of a maximum height of 5.5 m. The heights of the proposed building are determined by the storage and operational requirements of the company and the need to ensure that forklift trucks in particular can operate safely inside the buildings.

3.2.4 The overall scale of the development has been determined by the current and future operational requirements of the company. These requirements were analysed in detail in a report prepared by Nash for the company in 2009.

3.2.5 As outlined above, to the east of the proposed covered storage is a strip of land that is owned by the residential properties to the north and which provides the

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location of, and access to, a private sewage treatment works at the southern end. This strip of land will be retained by the residents, although it is proposed that access to the sewage treatment plant will be permitted from within the Fargro site. A further strip of land to the east of the sewage works is to be purchased to provide additional landscaping.

3.2.6 The existing landscape features around the edge of the site, which are to be entirely retained, are described in detail in the submitted Landscape and Visual Impact assessment by Chris Britton Associates. A summary of the visual impact of the development is included in section 13.

3.2.7 Further significant landscaping is proposed on the edge of the development and within the site. A chain-link security fence will be put around the site, but landscaping will be provided on both sides of the fence to minimise the visual impact.

3.2.8 The proposed development is shown on the drawings below.



Fig 3 Proposed layout of the site

4. Design Issues

4.1 Characteristics of design

4.1.1 The design of the buildings and their location within the site has been determined by both practical considerations and a desire to reduce any impact on surrounding areas to a minimum. The size of the buildings is the minimum necessary to allow for the relocation of the existing operation together with an element of future expansion.

4.1.2 The setting of the buildings has also been influenced by the need to avoid impacting on both the existing footpath to the west of the site and the drainage ditch running across the centre of the site. The difference in levels between the existing industrial site and the application site, and the need to provide a graded road to the site have also influenced the location of the main building towards the southern edge of the site. In this location, the building is also located further away from the residential properties in Lillian Terrace.

4.1.3 The main building will comprise a traditional steel frame construction with a number of pitched gables. This design will keep the overall building height to a minimum which will enable it to be as inconspicuous as possible with the existing industrial backdrop and significant levels of landscaping. The height and size of the building are effectively determined by the logistical requirements of the business.

4.1.4 To the eastern side of the building will be two storeys of offices. These will be incorporated within the overall building, but will be identified by the use of different cladding materials and by the fenestration which will be of black aluminium framing. The walls of the office element will be of black corrugated metal, as opposed to green for the rest of the building, but all the cladding will be of high quality materials with a detailed attention paid to fastenings and finishing. The roof will be of metal sheeting in green with significant numbers of skylights (15% of roof area) to ensure that the need for internal lighting is reduced to a minimum.

4.1.5 At the north east corner of the building, will be the main entrance. This part of the building will incorporate the reception area and the board room, and special attention has been paid to the design of this element, which will provide a focus for visitors. The entrance area will be glazed with corrugated glass and the boardroom windows will be projected out from the building. Living green walls will also be incorporated to provide visual interest (see below).

4.1.6 On the north side of the building adjoining the office area, will be trade sales counter for the collection of goods by existing trade customers. On the south side of the building, furthest away for the residential properties in Lillian Terrace, will be the main loading and unloading bays. A separate loading bay will also be located on the

4.1.9 To the east of the main building will be the covered storage area which will provide protection from the elements for the more durable products traded by the company such as plant pots and compost. It would be uneconomic and unnecessary to provide storage for these types of materials in a proper warehouse building, and there is insufficient capacity in the proposed main building to accommodate this storage requirement. In addition, it would be uneconomic and impractical to provide a mezzanine floor for this storage within the main building.

4.1.10 The covered storage will comprise a lightweight steel structure approximately 5 m high, with polythene roofing and sides. This material will be coloured green to match the main building. The west side of the building will remain partly open to allow for fork lift access. Further planting in front of this elevation would be impractical as this would interfere with access. The north, east and southern elevations of this structure will however be effectively screened by existing and proposed planting, as detailed in the landscape plans.



Fig 5. An image of the proposed construction of the covered storage – the front of the structure will remain open to allow for access



Fig 6. The inside of the covered storage showing the construction.

4.1.11 The area between the two buildings which incorporates the existing drainage ditch will also be extensively planted and landscaped and will be an attractive feature visible to employees and visitors to the site.



Fig 7. The Vinery with the proposed relocation site immediately to the south

4.2 Visual Impact of development

4.2.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the proposal has been prepared by Chris Britton Landscape Associates and is attached to the application.

4.2.2 In summary, the report concludes that although the proposed development includes a substantial amount of building, the impact of the development on surrounding areas will be mitigated by the following factors:

- The presence of the existing and proposed industrial buildings at the Vinery immediately to the north at a higher level.
- The existence of an existing tree screen to the north of the site.
- The remoteness of the site from residential properties to the south – Poling village is some half a mile to the south and west
- The ability to create a substantial landscape filter with native planting to the south, east and west of the site.

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4.2.3 The only significant visual receptors of the development will be a few of the existing residential properties on Lillian Terrace and users of the footpath running across the site to Poling Village. Views of the development from the 3 or 4 residential properties directly affected will be restricted to the narrow gap between Yarmer Barn and the Vinery development. This gap will be extensively landscaped so as to screen the proposal from this viewpoint.

4.2.4 Users of the footpath will be able to see the development when passing alongside and through the site, although these views will be mitigated by the extensive landscaping proposed.

4.2.5 The distant views from the properties in Poling Village across the fields will be largely unaffected due to the existing backdrop of development, and because the proposed landscaping area will provide a much more natural and effective visual barrier to the developed area than the existing Lleylandii screen. It should be noted that this screen is significantly higher than the proposed buildings.

4.2.6 The South Downs National Park is located immediately to the north of the A27, however the proposed development will not be visible from any part of the Park due to its location behind the Vinery and the character of the land.

5. Access issues

5.1 Proposed vehicle access arrangements

5.1.1 The existing Vinery site is accessed from the A27 at the eastern end of the site. It is proposed to improve this access to provide a diverge (deceleration) taper to the east and an improved road alignment for vehicles leaving the site. An assessment of the requirement to improve the access junction is included in the Transport Statement attached to the application. It is considered that this improvement would be of significant benefit for residents, existing business users of the Vinery, and for Fargro itself.

5.1.2 A proposed scheme is attached for consideration by the LPA. The A27 is a trunk road and so the Highways Agency is the statutory Highways Authority and has been separately consulted about the proposals.

5.1.3 The new junction will link to a newly constructed road within the Vinery site on the alignment of an existing road, leading directly to the application site. This access will allow two HGV's to pass safely, as well as providing a pedestrian zone.

5.1.4 Once in the Fargro site, commercial vehicles will be directed around the main warehouse building (and to the east of the drainage ditch) to the south side where unloading/loading will take place. There is a wide concrete apron provided here to allow for easy manoeuvring. Vehicles will then continue around the building on a one-way system to the exit. Private cars will be directed down a separate access, to a parking area to be provided to the east of the offices. These cars can then drive directly back to the exit from the parking area.

5.1.5 Access will also be provided via the main access road to Yarmer Barn which is currently occupied by a company providing video screens for public events. This will allow all commercial vehicles currently using Lillian Terrace to access Yarmer Barn, to be diverted and Lillian Terrace will become a purely residential street.

5.1.6 Within the site, vehicle routes and service areas will be clearly marked and pedestrian safe areas will be identified for staff and visitors.

5.1.7 A separate access to the field to the west will be provided from within the site.

5.2 Parking provision

5.2.1 The Arun local plan provides guidance on the maximum level of parking that should be provided for particular use types. While the NPPF does not provide any maximum parking levels, the local plan guidance does provide some indication of the Council's view in respect of parking provision.

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5.2.2 The parking standard in the local plan for storage and distribution uses (class B 8) of over 240 m² is as follows:

12 spaces + 1 space per 100 m² over 240 m² (appendix 2 table 5, Arun local plan 2003)

5.2.3 Based on the above formula, the main building will generate a maximum requirement of 61 parking spaces. The actual proposal provides for 52 parking spaces (one of which will be marked for motorcycle use) for staff and visitors to the building and a further six parking spaces relating to the trade counter. The proposed parking is within the requirements of the local plan and will meet the needs of the company.

5.2.4 The existing commercial vehicles of the company (5HGV's and two LGV's) will be parked at the rear of the site on the large apron in front of the loading bays when not in use.

5.2.5 Provision for 8 bicycles at the site will be made with the installation of Sheffield hoops at a location to be agreed with the LPA.

5.3 Vehicle Movements

5.3.1 Fargro currently operates 5 HGV's and 2 LGV's and receives up to 10 delivery vehicles per day, roughly half HGV's and half LGV's. The operating hours are from 6am until 7pm, with the majority of HGV movements between 6 am and 4pm.

5.3.2 Fargro's Operations Manager's assessment of traffic movements are as follows:

Fargro owned HGV's.	5 out and 5 in per day	10
HGV deliveries.	5 in and 5 out per day	10
Fargro LGV's.	2 out and 2 in per day	4
LGV deliveries.	5 in and 5 out per day	10
Staff cars.	36 in and 36 out per day	72
Business visitors.	4 in and 4 out per day	8
Trade counter collections.	15 in and 15 out per day	30
Total		144 (13.9% HGV)

5.4 Capacity of the existing junction

5.4.1 The existing planning consents in respect of the Vinery site were made on the basis of an assumed level of traffic being generated at the site. These were compared with the estimated level of traffic generated by the former Blue Prince Mushrooms facility at the site, and assessed against the standards for this type of junction used by the Highways Agency, and laid down in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges 1995. The relevant standard for the design of access junctions is TD 42/95 which states that for junctions onto a dual carriageway where left turns only in and out are possible:

- *A diverge taper is required where left turning traffic is 225 vehicles per day and the percentage of HGV's is more than 20%, or where turning traffic is 300 vehicles and percentage of HGV's is less than 20%.*
- *A merge taper is required when left turning traffic is 450 vehicles and the percentage of HGV's is more than 20% or where turning traffic is 600 vehicles and the percentage of HGV's is less than 20%*

5.4.2 It has been estimated that the original Mushroom Facility generated:

28 HGV	
8 LGV	
272 cars	
Sub-Total	308 trips per day

5.4.3 Residential traffic from Lillian Terrace was estimated as:

180 cars	
Total Vehicle Movements Per Day (VMPD)	488

5.4.4 The applications at the Vinery for the use of the existing buildings for B1 and B8 purposes and for the development of the Green waste compost plant were accompanied by a transport assessment by David Mason Engineering Consultants Ltd which made estimates for traffic generation at the site based on TRICS data. The estimated traffic generation was as follows:

Waste scheme	
37 HGV	
9 cars	
Total	46 (VMPD)

B1/B8 uses	
79 HGV	
140 LGV	

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389 cars
Total

609 VMPD

5.4.5 The total estimated level of daily vehicle movements through the junction was therefore 834, comprising 46 from the waste scheme, 609 from the B1/B8 scheme and 180 from the existing housing. The breakdown of the expected vehicle types was as follows:

116 HGV
140 LGV
534 cars
Total

834 VMPD

5.4.6 The above equated to 417 turns into the junction and 417 turns from the junction to the A27. The estimated level of traffic was sufficient to require a diverge taper (deceleration lane), but a merge taper (acceleration lane) was not necessary. Approval was granted for both of the above schemes on condition that the diverge taper was improved to Highway Agency standards. The condition was subsequently appealed on the basis that the existing diverge taper was adequate and this was upheld.

5.4.7 In 2012 a new traffic count was undertaken at the junction by Count-on-Us Ltd. There has been some additional development at the Vinery since the original approval and an unfinished development of B8 floorspace which will generate further additional traffic. The count showed that actual movements through the junction were as follows:

Actual movements (Count on us 2012)

To/From residential road
58 in (6.5% HGV)
61 out (6.5% HGV)

To/From the Vinery
160 in (20% HGV)
160 out (20% HGV)

Total 439 VMPD (17.5% HGV)
(Or approximately 220 in and 220 out per day)

5.4.8 If the existing Fargro operation was added to the current level of traffic, then there would be an estimated 583 VMPD, or 292 in movements and 292 out movements through the junction.

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5.4.9 While the site does require a diverge taper, even with significant growth in traffic, the standards would not require a merge taper. In fact, existing traffic levels would need to increase by 172% before a merge taper was required, assuming that HGV levels remained less than 20% of the total. With Fargro traffic included, levels would still have to more than double before a merge taper was required.

5.4.10 Despite an increase in traffic at the junction, there is potential to improve amenity for the residents along Lillian Terrace by providing an alternative access for the occupier of Yarmer Barn to the south of the Terrace. The occupier here does generate commercial vehicle movements, some of which are HGV's. The proposal will allow for an alternative access through the employment site thus relieving the Terrace of this commercial traffic.

5.4.11 As the access to the site is from a trunk road, the proposed junction arrangement will need to be approved by the Highways Agency, and pre-application discussions have been held to agree an appropriate junction design. As discussed, the design proposed envisages an improved and elongated diverge taper, and an improved exit arrangement allowing vehicles to be properly positioned to identify a safe opportunity to merge with the traffic flow on the A27.

5.5 Existing footpath

5.5.1 An existing statutory footpath runs along the northern boundary of the site and crosses the land as a diagonal at the western end. The development proposals do not affect the alignment of the path and indeed the red line of the application is drawn to the east of that part of the footpath crossing the field. The proposed new access to the site will need to cross the footpath and it is proposed that this will be by way of a ramped path raising the footpath to the level of the road. At the crossing point there will be kissing gates provided adjacent to the road. The level of traffic generated by the scheme is detailed in an earlier section of this report, but essentially vehicle flows to and from the site will be limited and intermittent and it is considered that there will be no conflict with users of the footpath. It is also proposed that the surface of the existing footpath is improved to a specification agreed with the County Council right-of-way section.

5.5.2 Consultation has been undertaken with the rights of way section of the County Council in respect of the footpath. The consultation response indicated that providing priority was given to pedestrians crossing the road by way of road markings, the rights of way section would not object to the scheme.

6. Other issues

6.1 Operating hours

6.1.1 The Vinery industrial estate currently has restrictive operating hours of 0700 to 1800 hours on Monday to Friday and 0700 to 1300 on Saturdays. In order to enable vehicles to be dispatched from the site at 0600 in the morning, an extension to the operating hours during weekdays only, is sought. In support of this part of the application, it is pointed out that the business needs to operate early dispatches in order to enable vehicles to deliver and return in a day and that restrictions limiting movements from 0700 would cause serious operational problems.

6.1.2 The justification for the restriction on operating hours at the Vinery has been to protect the amenities of the adjoining residents in Lillian Terrace. While this is entirely understandable, the acoustics report submitted with the application shows that the background noise from the A27 from 0600 is such that there would be no significant increase in noise from an HGV leaving the site. The estimated maximum number of 5 HGV movements from the site from 0600 is considered unlikely to create a noise nuisance.

6.2 Sustainable development

6.2.1 A key question to be asked is whether the scheme can be regarded as a sustainable development. Although it is not close to a major settlement, it is suggested that the location is the most appropriate for the type of business proposed and as such is sustainable. In support of this it is noted that:

- The business is essentially a distribution business supplying rural based horticultural businesses with the products they need to operate.
- The location of the business in relation to the customer base and the road network is vitally important if the distribution process is to be efficient, while minimising the impact on existing settlements and the transport infrastructure associated with these settlements. It is estimated that overall, delivery mileage to customers will be reduced by relocating to the proposed site.
- The proposed site is ideally located for access to customers and minimising the impact of deliveries on the local road network. The proposed location will provide direct access to the A27 and will remove existing vehicle movements through residential areas.
- The proposed site is close to the existing base of the company and will minimise disruption and journeys to work of the existing staff. For some employees, the journey to work will be easier than at present. A green travel plan will be prepared to help minimise the impact of staff travel.

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- The proposal will retain a local business in the local area.
- Sustainable building methods and practices will be utilised to minimise energy use, save water and protect the environment.
- It is intended to install solar panels on the roof to generate electricity for the company's own needs, and possibly to provide a surplus for the National Grid.

6.3 Air quality

6.3.1 The Environment Act (1995) requires all district and borough councils to review sources of pollution in their own areas, and to assess the likely future concentrations of a number of pollutants. In 2007, the Government reviewed the National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS), which sets out the national approach to maintaining and improving the quality of ambient (outside) air. Of particular importance are fine particles, such as nitrogen oxide and ozone, where Government targets have not been previously met.

6.3.2 In general, the quality of air across West Sussex is good. Most of the older polluting industries have gone and few homes rely on coal fires for their major source of heating. Pollution near traffic sources and in built-up areas remains a problem, so monitoring busy roads is a priority. In 90% of cases, traffic is the main reason for the need to declare an Air Quality Management Area.

6.3.3 There are however no air quality management areas designated in Arun district. The A 27 is however a major road and in 2011, 28,500 vehicles per day on average used the road in both directions adjacent to the site (WSCC traffic counts).

6.3.4 It is estimated that the current application will generate a total of 144 vehicle movements per day to and from the A 27. This represents 0.5% of the total which is considered to be insignificant, particularly bearing in mind that the traffic generation is not the result of new journeys being undertaken but rather relocated from only 1 mile away. It is considered that the impact of the development on air quality will not be significant.

6.4 Flood risk and Hydrological Impact

6.4.1 The site is not within an area of flood risk, but the construction of the building, hard surfaces and covered storage will impact on the capacity of the land to accommodate flood water runoff. There is however considered to be sufficient land within the site to design a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) that will enable flood water to be retained and released slowly from the site. The SUDS

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scheme will involve creating a water retention area at the western part of the site, in conjunction with landscape enhancements.

6.4.2 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage strategy has been prepared by Millward Consulting and is attached to this document.

6.5 Ground conditions

6.5.1 A Phase 1 contamination assessment report has been prepared and is attached to this statement. There are no concerns in respect of land contamination on the site.

6.6 Ecology

6.6.1 The development site is a grazed horse paddock with no trees or significant vegetation, and is not within or near any designated ecological sites. A Phase 1 ecological survey has been undertaken over the site by Ecology Consultants and is appended to this report. As a result of the phase 1 survey, it was recommended that further work was done in respect of reptiles on the site and during an extended survey to locate reptiles, a single specimen of great crested newt was located near the footpath.

6.6.2 As a result of this discovery, a more extensive greater crested newt survey was required to be undertaken by the County Council. This survey was undertaken during April and May 2013 and determined that a medium-size population of greater crested newt's inhabited a pond adjacent to a residential property in Poling Street, some 400 m from the site. In view of the distance of the breeding site from the development proposals, together with the extensive habitat creation proposed on the site as part of the landscaping and drainage proposals, it is not considered there is any risk to the great crested newt population of the area, providing a programme of trapping and relocation occurs prior to any development which might affect GCN habitat. If planning permission is granted, a licence application for any works will need to be made to Natural England.

6.7 Archaeology

6.7.1 A desk-based Archaeology report has been prepared by the Southampton City Council Archaeological Unit and is attached to the application. There are no known features of archaeology on the site.

6.8 Lighting.

6.8.1 A lighting concept plan has been prepared and is submitted with the application. The intention is to minimise the number and intensity of external lighting commensurate with maintaining safety and security at the site. The lighting that is provided will be installed as low as possible on the site, and facing downwards with directional lighting minimising any light spillage. Other than security lighting which will be activated by movement, all lighting will be turned off outside working hours. Final details of the lighting to be installed will be agreed with the local planning authority.

6.9 Crime and security

6.9.1 The site itself is a secure location being at the rear of an existing industrial estate with multiple occupiers, where incidents of crime have been very rare. One of the key reasons for this is the natural monitoring and surveillance of the site by the residents in Lillian Terrace. Access to the site is difficult without passing these residential properties.

6.9.2 The proposed Fargro site will be fenced and will have a separate gated access to the south of the existing right-of-way which runs along the north and western boundaries of the site. The site will have security lighting as specified above and CCTV monitoring to provide further security.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The proposed relocation site meets the needs of the company and will only have a limited impact on the environment and neighbours. The site proposed for the relocation is the only realistic option for the company, is easy to develop and is currently available. It will enable the company activities to continue without disruption, and provide significant economic and employment benefits to the local area.

7.2 It has been demonstrated that the proposal does comply with policy DEV 8 of the local plan, which allows for development within a rural area in exceptional circumstances. The proposal is also in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF and also with the aims of the new local plan being prepared for the district, which gives a high priority to economic development.

PAPA Ltd

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